Chapter 1

Survey of Land People (1)

(Cf. the map [colored in the original] at the end of the book.)

114 1. Part of this chapter is taken from a lecture which I gave at the 19th German Geographers' Conference in Strasbourg in the spring of 1914.

1. The Land Urundi

131 In the extreme west of German East Africa lies one of the regions of Africa least known until now: Urundi. To the north it borders on Ruanda, to the east on Ussuwi and Uha, to the south also on Uha, to the west on Lake Tanganyika and the Ruzizi River. Since Urundi has an area of almost 29,000 square kilometers, i.e., approximately twice that of the Kingdom of [161] Saxony, and since it has over one and a half million inhabitants (according to van der Burgt, around two and a half million), it deserves attention for this reason alone. However, although 648 it has been German territory for over 25 years, we know little about it. Because of the recalcitrance of its population, the government had almost completely closed off the area to travel from the outside, and until 1911 political influence was limited to the establishment of a station with a resident and a company of colonial troops in Usumbura on Lake Tanganyika. It was not until 1912 that the seat of government was moved on a trial basis to Gitega in the interior of the region.

648 Oskar Baumann in 1812 was the first European who •797 traveled through northern Urundi to the source of the Nile on the upper Ruvuvu. There followed then between 1896 and 1898 several military expeditions by colonial army officers, Ramsay, von Trotha, Langheld, von Langenn-Steinkeller, Fonck, and Dr. Kandt; and between 1896 and 1899 the Catholic Mission of

648 the "White Fathers" founded the stations of Usumbura (later
[797] moved to Marienheim), Mujaga, and Mugera in central Urundi. However, this advance of the Europeans was met with hostility by the Barundi [Rundi], so that from 1900 on German colonial troops under their leaders, Bethe, von Beringe, and von Grawert, had to contend with Kisabo, the king of Urundi, whereupon the Barundi finally recognized the sovereignty of the Germans. This recognition, however, is only nominal, for our power there is much too small to permit the establishment of a German administration in Urundi as yet.

114 Under such circumstances the exploration of Urundi could make no substantial progress. Ethnology alone has been advanced to a high degree by Father J. M. M. van der Burgt, who for many years was active in Urundi as a missionary and published the results of his excellent ethnological studies in Dictionnaire Français-Kirundi which appeared in 1903 through the Dutch Missionary Publishing House at Bois le Duc. The extremely extensive ethnological and ethnographical data, however, are so interspersed in this book with all kinds of historical and [2] linguistic digressions that it is difficult to extract and methodically collate the ethnological data of scientific value.

In view of this situation I decided to devote part of my 1911 expedition to the investigation of Urundi. Therefore, I worked there for a few months, sufficient time to obtain an over-all view which I have endeavored to supplement, as far as possible, by inquiries, correspondence, and other kinds of studies. Setting out from Ruanda in the northwest, I first crossed the northwestern mountain region, the "Mountains of the Moon" with my two companions, Lieutenant Tiller and Dr. Houy, then descended to the great central African depression into the valley of the Ruzizi, then crossed in dugouts the northern end of Lake Tanganyika to the residency, Usumbura, and thereupon traveled through the whole of central Urundi from west to east in a month and further through northern Uha and the Ussumbwa states, until finally, at Tabora, I reached the central railroad by which I traveled to Dar es Salaam.

241 In spite of all this, the Barundi do not grow more crops
433 than they need for their subsistence during the year. The soil
[134] is, for the most part, fertile red earth and, in the valley plains, dark gray alluvial soil or humus, except in the sterile and stony quartzite regions of the east. With or without artificial irrigation, this soil could produce much more if a larger area were cultivated. This is prevented mainly by the absence of trade. [56] Since there are neither markets nor organized trade in the large area of central Urundi -- only the Tanganyika region possesses both -- the Murúndi could do nothing with what he produced beyond his own needs. Moreover, the Murundi does not anticipate bad harvests. Like nearly all Negroes, he never
731 worries about the future. Since not even the hardy manioc (which, even in the driest years when everything else withers, still furnishes a good yield) is grown in large quantities, extensive areas are plagued by famine in poor harvest years. This is especially true of the arid quartzite regions of eastern Urundi.
● [797] Then the missionary stations (Mugera, Mujaga, and others) and the government try to help by importing grain (sorghum) from Uha and Usámbiro, but they still cannot prevent many people, particularly children, from starving to death.

241 Another important reason that prevents further expansion
423 of agriculture can be found in the way land is owned, in the overruling power of the Batussi who claim, above all, grazing land for their herds of cattle. We shall discuss this problem later (p. 57).

241 Various efforts are made to protect the growing crops
136 against pests. Weeds are cleared away; caterpillars, beetles, and snails are picked off; birds are frightened away by scarecrows which, for example, are made of gallows-shaped sorghum stalks tied one upon the other with dry, rattling fruit suspended from them. Large animals, however, like the wild boars and baboons in the mountains of western Urundi, are either kept out by fences or chased away by watchmen who walk around in the daytime and at night take up their positions in small huts perched on high posts. From there the guards from time to time set up a loud shouting or rattle with sticks. In the valleys of western

this would result in this person's or his father's death. A child who my mistake sits on the pad will stop growing unless it spits on the pillow so as to ward off evil (No. 19, p. 553). Most probably the underlying reasons for this fear are totemistic conceptions.

3. Missions

The extreme pride of caste and race of the Batussi is the main reason the work of Christian missions has had little success in Urundi. Teachings about the brotherhood of all Christians require the Mutussi to regard himself as the equal of his "slave," the Bahutu, or even to associate in a brotherly manner with the [139] despised pariahs, the Batwa. The Mutussi bluntly rejects these ideas outright, not for religious but for social reasons, and it is obvious that every Mutussi will prohibit the Bahutu over whom he rules to join a religious community whose teachings aim at leveling the deep social chasm on which the political rule of the Batussi over the large mass of the Bahutu is based. Among the Bahutu the missionaries are opposed by strong and persistent enemies: the priests (kiranga), medicine men (abafumu), and the members of secret religious societies (for example, the ababandwa), who control the spiritual and emotional life of their countrymen and whose connections and organizations form a network over the entire land. Although Christian missionaries have been active for more than 30 years in the country, their work is still limited mainly to the poor and destitute who have no contact with their own people. Van der Burgt writes: "Most of those who come to the missions are starving persons during the frequent hunger epidemics and decrepit old men and women who have been cast out by their families. It would be easy to fill an old people's home with hundreds of inmates within a few weeks, for many of them are drowned by their families in the nearest river. Cattle are much dearer to the heart of the Murundi than are his aged relatives" No. 23, 1905, p. 178). As to the rest the rest there are only very few Barundi who have become Christians from inner conviction.

797 For all these national, social, and political reasons, the Batussi would also reject Islam if at some time in the future it should attempt to gain a foothold in this country which so far has been hardly accessible to foreign penetration. The memory of the battles they fought against Arab slave hunters only intensifies the Murundi's rejection of it.

The missionaries, however, continue their work untiringly in spite of little expectation of spreading the gospel among the Barundi as long as the Batussi remain the rulers. Such idealism and firmness of belief is indeed admirable. For many years only the Catholic "White Fathers" were active in this area. In 1896 they founded the first mission in Mujaga (east Urundi; Plate 29b), and later they opened other missions in Mugera (central Urundi), Marienberg (west Urundi), Mariensee (north-eastern Urundi). The Protestant Neudettelsbach Mission began its activity in Iruwura (northwest Urundi) only in 1910. The founding of a second mission in northwest Urundi followed in 1912.

797 177 Due to the predominantly negative attitude of the Barundi, very little cultural work has been accomplished of the kind which prepares for and accompanies actual missionary work: teaching basic school subjects, guidance in handicrafts, the spread of innovations in agriculture and stockbreeding. The medical activity of the missionaries seems still to be more efficacious than anything else in winning the confidence of the people.

In the Batussi states of Ruanda and Uha which have been inaccessible to the outside world for such a long time, the position is the same. On the other hand, the adjoining areas of Ussumbwa, Usindja, and Ihangiro, where the people are less divided by differences of caste and race and where there is no strict Batussi rule, have been open to foreign influences for a much longer period and there the work of the missionaries has been far more successful. Only time can tell whether the prospects for Christianization will also improve in Urundi. Most probably this will come about once the power of the Batussi rulers has been destroyed.

2: Meyer--263 K-5 (1911) 1916 FO42 Rundi FO42

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Sacred Grove (Imana) in Central Urundi
(Photo. by J. M. van der Burgt)

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Church at the Mujaga Missionary Station, East Urundi
(Photo. by Hans Meyer, 1911)

173 His reign, being recent, is well known, and the tale of his expeditions is still to be heard from the lips of those of his contemporaries who survived him. His popularity is almost equal to that of his grandfather Ruganzu II, whose deeds and actions, badly distorted by legend as they are, have been preserved and are still the subject of many a fireside conversation. Lwabugiri's shifts of mood were most interesting.
[797] His revenges, like his bloodthirsty whims, were short lived. He would raise the children of his victims and adopt young captives for whom he took a fancy, shower them with wealth, and admit them into his family.

His immediate successor, Mibambge IV Rutalindwa, barely remained on the throne for a year. He was overthrown by Kabale, the most powerful chief of the Hamitic Bega clan.

So as not to fall alive into the hands of his enemies, the vanquished king took his own life. Mussinga, one of Lwabugiri's youngest sons, was immediately enthroned under the name of Yuhi IV.

Through his mother Kanjogera, he was a nephew of the ambitious Kabale, who was regent before the young prince came of age. The Banyiginya clan, from which the royal family is issued and which had until then wielded a preponderant influence at court, was stripped of its property. The most outstanding chiefs of the vanquished party were relentlessly killed by the Bega people, who divided the government of the provinces among themselves over the corpses of their victims. The Bega men, embittered because they had been kept away from public affairs, were avenging once and for all the inferior position in which they felt /93/ they had been held for such a long time by their rivals.

One may ask whether Kabale when he gave his nephew the royal name of Yuhi did not do so intentionally.

643 173 551 Two categories of kings are distinguished: warrior kings and peaceful kings (from the verb guteka, "to sit." (1))

1. The same verb guteka also means "to cook" (kupika in Kiswahili).

The name which is given to them on the day of their enthronement binds and commits them throughout their reign to a certain course of

412 have a sharp, chisel-like blade (igembe) which fans out at the cutting end. Its narrower part (intereri) fits into the hole (intoboro) at the thick end (impumo) of the handle (omuhini). The bush knife is entirely forged out of iron. The upper third is wide and has one sharp cutting edge (lulimi). The upper half (isatuliro) of this third is bent like a sickle and comes to a point. The remaining two thirds is round. The lower third is driven into a wooden [140] handle (kilindi) that is slightly thicker at the lower end and reinforced above with wire or smoothly forged iron.

313 372 As a result of the extensive deforestation, the lumber shortage is a very important economic problem. In some places wood must be brought in from long distances. In the northeast where wood is hard to come by, dried cow dung is used for fuel.

245 ●197 Under the influence of Catholic missions the natives have begun to plant trees. Moreover, outside the missions' sphere of influence I saw new plantings of mussavi in Ruangeri on the road to Kisenyi, four and a half hours from Ruasa.

231 Animal Husbandry. The inhabitants of Ruanda keep cows, goats, sheep, chickens, and dogs. Stockraising plays an important role in the economic and political life. Cattle farming is almost exclusively the [141] occupation of the ruling Batutsi. Sheep and especially goats are raised chiefly by the agricultural Bahutu. It is only in Mulera and Bugoye that the Bahutu commonly have cows. The animals are cared for by the men. Out in the pasture, however, one sometimes sees a girl tending a cow or a small herd of goats.

231 554 Cattle raising is considered the most distinguished occupation a man can have. This phenomenon is explained by the superior social position of the Batutsi. "In Uganda, where cattle raising is despised, it is almost impossible to persuade a Waganda [Ganda] to go into it." (1)

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1. Wilson, C.T., and Felkin, R. W., Uganda und der Ägyptische Sudan [Uganda and the Egyptian Sudan] (Stuttgart, 1883), Vol. I, p. 67.

563 582 614 even though a child of a Mututsi by his legal Muhutu wife is de jure a Mututsi. Such children are, however, because of their mothers, robbed of all such connections, and this accelerates their absorption by the Bahutu.

Similarly, however, there are cases where prominent Bahutu, if they occupy the position of chief, are absorbed into the Batutsi through mixed marriages. This was the case, for example, with the Barashi chief, Lukara Iwa Bishingwe, from the Muhawura volcano. This probably explains how "Batutsi" happen to belong to the clans of Bazigaba, Basinga, Bagessera, and Basita.

Mixed marriages between Batutsi men and Bahutu women are more common than those between Bahutu men and Batutsi women. There are said to be no mixed marriages with Batwa. This aversion [197] persists even in Christian communities, and I even heard that the only baptized Mutwa in a Christian congregation could not find a wife.

572 608 [243] Blood Brotherhood. In speaking of exogamy, we mentioned it as the primary factor in the social integration of a society that is split up by mutually warring clans. We shall now discuss the second factor, namely, the institution of blood brotherhood.

In Mulera, if you wish to show someone that you value his friendship, you go to him to replenish your fire. To make the friendship secure, however, you must join with him in the pact of blood brotherhood (kunywana).

Simple friendship is very sharply distinguished in Ruanda from the social institution of blood brotherhood. The word for friendship is kwuzulu which literally means "filled" or "full." People are regarded as friends who "are saturated with one another," and who must therefore be considerate of each other.

572 608 678 There are friends on all levels of the social system, but it seems that the institution of blood brotherhood in Ruanda is connected with the undifferentiated clan organization of the north. This is doubtless due to the fact that in regions like Nduga, for example, where the chief's power is well organized, the individual can count on a certain measure of protection from the representatives of the state, but in regions where the entire country

695 The last two allegations imply that sad consequences could result if a person expresses intentions that are hostile to the king. The person making the statement publicly announces that if he told a lie he would willingly suffer persecution for threatening the sacred person of the king. Nevertheless, the Batutsi, who could probably set a record for lying, use this phrase constantly.

In doubtful cases where the testimony of witnesses is not at hand or is not sufficiently credible, as well as in cases where the use of sorcery is suspected, the poison test (kihango) is resorted to. The poison test is conducted by the babandwa [members of secret societies who conduct ceremonies].

In Kissaka the poison is dissolved in water and handed to both parties in two cow horns. This gives the mubandwa an opportunity to influence the outcome directly and to use his own judgment in determining the guilty one. Although this makes it very easy for a person to misuse the poison test, the people of Kissaka believe in it. Even the Christians do, in spite of the otherwise very great influence of the mission. The poison test seldom results in death in Ruanda, for the person taking it can immediately spit and vomit. The poison is not always drunk, for not infrequently the mubandwa is satisfied to dip his thumb into the poison and stick it into the mouth of the person, who may immediately expectorate. In such cases the effect is purely a psychological one. [285] Father L. Classe, who lived in the country seven years, never heard of a death caused by the poison test.

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Another very important form of evidence is testimony from the entrails of chickens killed for this purpose. We shall discuss this somewhat more fully below in connection with religious practices.

Quite independent of the chicken oracle, there is a chick oracle that is conducted in the following way. The accused takes a very small chick and carries it in his hand a whole day. If the chick dies, the man is guilty, yiera bura (he is black). If the chick does not die, the man is innocent, yeira [sic] bwera (he is white). A very strange color association for the Negro world (see page 145).

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All forms of evidence and allegation, such as the poison test, the chicken oracle, the spear oath, and the Musinga oath, are

9:Maquet E-5 (1949-1951) 1961 FO42 Rundi FO42

gives a density of 235·8 per square mile or 91·9 per square kilometre.[13] This density is among the highest in Africa, south of the Sahara.[14] What may we infer from these figures as regards the population at the beginning of this century? According to the available statistics for the last fifteen years, when the circumstances are favourable the yearly increase of Ruanda population may reach three per cent. This increased ratio could hardly have been maintained over the whole of the last fifty years, mainly because the 'favourable circumstances' refer to medical amenities, new hygienic practices and the reduction of famine. Such conditions were by no means prevalent when the Europeans occupied the country in 1899.[15] Even since 1935, however, events have not always been favourable, as for three years (1941–2–3) there was a decrease of population due to a severe scarcity of food. Consequently it seems safe to assume that during the decades preceding the European occupation, the population was already very dense. According to Captain Bethe, it numbered about 2,000,000 in 1899.[16] In 1907, Czekanowski estimated the Ruanda population at approximately 1,710,000.[17]

According to a detailed survey made by the Department of Agriculture, there are about 60,000 to 70,000 families (out of a total of about 380,000 families) more than can be adequately fed by the country.[18] There is also an excess of cattle. In 1950 there

[13] There is a census for the male and able-bodied adults who are taxpayers. To obtain the total number of the population (females, old people, and children) the number of taxpayers in each administrative district is multiplied by a certain coefficient which is determined in each case by a sample-census of a few hills.

[14] For comparative purposes, there are a few density figures for some African territories according to present political boundaries: Uganda: 52·8 per square mile; Tanganyika: 20·7; Belgian Congo: 12·9; Nigeria: 92·0; Sierra Leone: 66·5. All these figures, taken from Hailey, 1957, p. 143, refer to the years 1948-52.

[15] Captain Bethe, a German officer, obtained from the king in 1899 Ruanda's acceptance of the Imperial Government's protection. There was no treaty, only an oral agreement which was followed by a permanent occupation by the German authorities. The first Christian mission was established in 1900, at Isavi, by the White Fathers. Belgian troops took possession of Ruanda during the First World War in 1916. The Belgian occupation of Ruanda-Urundi was confirmed by the Orts-Milner Agreement in 1919. In 1924, Belgium agreed to administer Ruanda-Urundi under the supervision of the Permanent Mandates Commission of the League of Nations. After the Second World War, Ruanda-Urundi became a United Nations Organization Trusteeship Territory administered by Belgium. Cf. Jentgen, 1947, pp. 9-11, 83-9

[16] Quoted by Czekanowski, 1917, p. 109 n. [17] See Czekanowski, 1917, p. 114.

[18] This study is based on an estimate of the optimum cultivated area needed by a family, the quality of the soil being taken into account. A similar method has been used in the case of cattle. Cf. Ministère des Colonies, 1951b, pp. 343-7.